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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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### Abstract

Considers the influence of Williams on Heath-Stubbs's Arthurian poem cycle. Part I looks at zodiacal imagery.

### Additional Keywords

Arthur, King—In poetry; Eliot, T.S.—Influence on John Heath-Stubbs; Heath-Stubbs, John—Influence of Charles Williams; Heath-Stubbs, John. Artorius; Muses in Artorius; Williams, Charles—Influence on John Heath-Stubbs; Zodiac in Artorius

# John Heath-Stubbs' *Artorius* and the Influence of Charles Williams

Joe R. Christopher

## I. "Fit Audience ... Though Few"

... I am to this day ignorant of what damnable heresy lurks in John Heath-Stubbs' capacious mind.

--John E. Van Domelen

One hundred years ago Charles Williams was born, but I would like to begin elsewhere: sixty-eight years ago John Heath-Stubbs was born, and twelve years ago (as this paper was read at Mythcon 17) he published *Artorius*, subtitled A heroic poem in four books and eight episodes. It is, to my taste, the greatest Arthurian poem published so far in this century. Perhaps I should add that I do not consider T.S. Elliot's use of Arthurian allusions enough to make *The Waste Land* into a really Arthurian poem.

Of course, there are not a large number of significant poems to balance it against. Edwin Arlington Robinson's poems are basically psychological studies -- *Merlin* (1917), *Lancelot* (1920), and *Tristram* (1927). I feel that Robinson's interests in the poems run contrary to the romance material, but no doubt the poems speak to other readers than me. John Masefield's lyric sequence *Midsummer Night* (1928) does not, to my judgement, contain first-rate lyrics. Charles Williams' two books in this competition -- *Taliessin through Logres* (1938) and *The Region of Summer Stars* (1944) -- are, like Robinson's, not dismissable to some tastes. Williams' odes seem to me, however, more a coterie taste than a general one. This may be no more than to say they are modern poems: but I think it is a little more. Williams' theological interests are alien to the modern world, and the geometric imagery which he uses to convey Heaven's precision does not convey his meaning to the Common Reader. I agree this is the reader's loss, but I also think my estimate is accurate. Now it is true that Ezra Pound's historical references and Chinese ideograms in his *Cantos* are just as alien to the Common Reader; but that is just to say that Pound's *Cantos*, except for a few excerpts, are also for a coterie -- a different coterie, to be sure, but a coterie.

Heath-Stubbs' *Artorius* is certainly a modern poem, mixing verse forms and, like John Wain's *Feng* (1974), prose passages. But *Artorius* is like *Feng* in another way: both are based on stories which are part of the Common Reader's knowledge, if not on the best-known versions. Wain's poem is based on the Hamlet story, and Heath-Stubbs' on the King Arthur legend -- except, in the latter case, on a pre-Lancelot version of the legend. I should stress that, since Williams' odes are certainly based on the Arthurian materials also, that a second way in which Heath-Stubbs avoids the full coterie designation is that his poem is, episodially, a telling of the story. This takes sometimes the form of dramas, sometimes of narrative verse; but the structure of the myth is there -- in a clearer way than it comes through Williams' odes.

A third way in which Heath-Stubbs may reach the Common Reader is through his use of anachronism. He brings in modern references as he presents the story.

His poem has "applicability," as the jargon says; that is, the modern meanings are made clearer than in many poems. These references are sometimes brief and sometimes extended, as will be illustrated later and, in one area, discussed in the fifth section of this paper.

Now, I realize there is something absurd in discussing how Heath-Stubbs reaches, or may reach, the Common Reader when the Common Reader has never heard of him. But I am, by critical indirection, making a point. I believe that Heath-Stubbs has made an effort to reach a general audience, even if he has not been successful yet. I do not consider this a vice in a poet; neither is necessarily a virtue. Milton did alright with his "fit audience... though few" (*Paradise Lost* VII.317). I suspect, outside of forced readings in schoolrooms, which do not ultimately count -- only private re-readings count -- that Milton has today achieved his prediction. Indeed, it may reach the point when an audience which knows the classics and the Bible is also considered a coterie: but not yet, not yet. There is something of a western cultural tradition still.

I wrote that I considered it neither a vice nor a virtue for a poet to try to reach a broad audience. Probably it depends on how he attempts to reach it. What I do consider, if not a vice, then a species of folly, is for a poet to do the opposite, to write obscurely and perhaps with personal references, and then complain about his small readership. C.S. Lewis, in his commentary on Williams' odes, spends some space on considering to what degree Williams' references are esoteric (187-190). At any rate, John Heath-Stubbs seems to be attempting, in general, to communicate.

So much for that thesis. If I want to argue against my case, I think I would cite Heath-Stubbs' diction. He may use too many rare words to ever be popular. But an extensive vocabulary comes with the major poet's role.

About the religious beliefs of Milton since the publication of *De Doctrina Christiana*, and about his political beliefs far before that, there is, in a general sense, agreement. Williams also left theological and other works which indicate his views. But I do not know a full, written-out equivalent for Heath-Stubbs. This may be my ignorance. At any rate, I can indicate enough of a position for the purpose of this paper. John Heath-Stubbs seems to be a curious combination of a neo-pagan, as the term is used in America, and a Christian. First the former term.

Two editors of an anthology have said that he "has avowed a moral commitment to speak out... as a votary of [a] muse -- sometimes neo-Hellenic, sometimes at her home in the English countryside" (Kermode and Hollander 2172). I will be explicit enough for many of my readers if I say that the first time I came upon Heath-Stubbs' name it was in the acknowledgements at the first of Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* (v). I am certain that it is no slip that *Artorius* is sung to his watery grave in this poem by the virgin Zennora --

Her hair was white  
As the cotton-grass, and her face dead-white,  
Like bleached bone that lay upon the shore. (99)

It is true that the poem says that no one knew if she was Christian or Druid (99), and it is true that her song has Biblical echoes and invokes the Trinity (100), appropriately enough for Artorius; but her appearance suggests at least an incarnation of the White Goddess, the Muse, if partly in service of the Christian God.

Now then, why do I call Heath-Stubbs a Christian? First, because in two different printings of his listing in Contemporary Authors John Press is quoted in calling him "a Christian haunted by guilt, remorse, and a fear of damnation" (Contemporary Authors, Vol. 13-14 [1965], 201; First Revision, Vol. 13-16 [1975], 373). Second, Heath-Stubbs himself, in an interview, says that he became an atheist in his later public-school days. The interviewer asks, "Does that still remain your attitude?" "No," Heath-Stubbs replies, "I'm a practicing Anglican" (Wightman 74). Of course, as my readers all know, a practicing Anglican can believe almost anything these days; but I assume he means something more than one who goes to Church out of a sense of decorum. Third and finally, in a poem titled "Epitaph," Heath-Stubbs describes himself as

Orthodox in beliefs as following the English  
Church  
Barring some heresies he would have for  
recreation  
Yet too often left these sound principles (as  
I am told) in the lurch  
Being troubled with idleness, lechery, pride,  
and dissipation.

I am not here interested in Heath-Stubbs' sins, just in his beliefs. Orthodox, he calls himself, barring some heresies. I would suggest that his orthodoxy is Christian and his heresy is, in Graves' terminology, Arkite. That is, he venerates the White Goddess.

I do not want to put too much emphasis on Robert Graves in my paper. That is a topic for someone else, at another time. But I would like to suggest that the half pagan, half Christian background of the Arthurian tales is made to order for a person like Heath-Stubbs who can take both sides seriously.

Finally, to bring this introduction back to its starting place, I would like to mention Charles Williams' influence on Heath-Stubbs. This was at Oxford University during World War Two. Heath-Stubbs was at Queen's College, where his tutor was Brett-Smith and the director of his Bachelor of Literature -- which Heath-Stubbs did not finish -- was Nicoll Smith. But in the interview, in reply to a question about the Oxford teachers who influenced him, Heath-Stubbs replies, "C.S. Lewis and Nevill Coghill and Charles Williams" (Wightman 79). A.T. Tolley writes in his essay on Heath-Stubbs:

A figure who commanded the admiration of Heath-Stubbs and his contemporaries at Oxford was the Anglican poet and publisher Charles Williams, who had been enlisted to lecture, as so many younger fellows were away at the war. According to Heath-Stubbs, Williams "exerted a lasting and deep influence" on the work of the younger generation of poets in the 1940s. In his works Williams showed an admiration for the then little-favored romantic poets and an interest in Arthurian

legend and in magic. "Younger poets," Heath-Stubbs later wrote, "became interested in mythological and religious symbolism, as a means of expressing areas of experience inaccessible to the intellect alone." (141)

Thus it may be, if Tolley is right, that the impulse to write Artorius came to Heath-Stubbs, however mixed with other, later motives, from the influence of Charles Williams. I will consider specific debts owed by Artorius to Williams' odes in a later section; but what I am suggesting in this centennial year of Williams' birth is that not only his works but his influence is important.

However, I would like to begin on Artorius elsewhere.

## II. The Signs of the Zodiac

When and where the Zodiac originated is not known, but it is believed to have gradually evolved in Babylonia in the life-story of the hero Gilgamesh.

--Robert Graves

John Heath-Stubbs, if he had lived in the seventeenth century, probably would have titled his book Artoriad: it is a twelve-book epic. In the first book, Gwion, "the bard of the Brythons" (7), speaks first of his own time and then of Heath-Stubbs' time:

We evoke an order: an interim is assigned --  
As a poet, perhaps, in the future predicament  
Of the doubtfulness and dullness of a third Dark  
Age.  
Might undertake the unfashionable inditing of an  
epic,  
Though his colleagues and his confreres confined  
themselves merely  
To little linguistic and logical constructs,  
Or deployed their egos in the Dionysiac delirium  
Of surreal illumination, or psychedelic self-  
indulgence --  
He might establish an order, by the example of  
this experiment,  
Driving his through-road across the thickets of  
thoughtlessness,  
And he also [,] if temporarily, might turn the  
tide.... (10-11)

Heath-Stubbs obviously has greater hopes than Eliot's shoring of fragments against his ruin; I think there is no doubt of Eliot's success in his shoring up -- Heath-Stubbs' through-road is built, but has few travelers as yet. Perhaps, if others like myself erect some roadsigns...

Unlike the classical epic, however, Heath-Stubbs' work has a title for each book: these titles are not words, but the symbols for the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac. The first book has the symbol Aries the Ram. I am not going to describe each of the symbols, but let me be explicit about this one so that I am certain I am communicating. The symbol is rather like a capital T with the cross bar at the top bumped up on either side of the center line into two curves like the horns of a ram.

Beginning with Aries, the epic follows through the Signs of the Zodiac for the rest of the year. "Aries," after an invocation of which I will return, tells something of the battle of Mount Badon. Heath-Stubbs places this battle in March, which is appropriate since the Sun enters the Sign of the Ram on 21 March:

Man's woe is manifest in the night sky of March,  
In the darkness before dawn of that day of  
battles,  
And the lilting of the larks that salute the  
first light --  
Outrageous Area that is arbiter of anger. (3)

Ares, the Greek god of war, may well be a pun also, in this passage, for Aries.

Late in the book, after the Brythons have overthrown the Saxons, this acclamation of Artorius:

"We acknowledge the Ymherawdr.  
Restore in these islands the regimen of Rome,  
By right, after this rout. As our ram-horned  
Alexander  
We salute you, and as Caesar; seize then the  
imperium --  
By our Praetorian sufferage we promote you to  
that power." (10)

And the feast after the victory is on a near-by flock of sheep, for which Cadoc of a small group of Christian hermits is promised compensation (12-13). So the motifs of the Signs of the Zodiac are found in these books not just in the seasons (here, March) but also in occasional touches of content (possibly the pun, "ram-horned Alexander," the flock of sheep).

Book Two, "Taurus the Bull," is cast as a retrospective dialogue between Bishop Bedwini and another about the unification of the British Church in the time of Artorius. The Zodiacal reference is not to the time of the dialogue but the time of the synod at Oxford, and Bedwini dates it most precisely:

In the month of April, when the sun enters the sign of Taurus. The Planet Venus is the ruler of that house, as astrologers say. And if we are to believe them, her influences might not be unpropitious for such a gathering.... (16)

He goes on to distinguish, on the basis of Plato, between the Spiritual and Physical Venuses; but I have quoted enough to show the time. I might add that, according to Heath-Stubbs, this synod was held soon after the battle of Mount Badon and Artorius' conquest of London; at this point, Artorius was still a count, not yet a king (15). It was after the celebration which ended the synod, at which much wine was drunk, that Modred was engendered; as Bedwini expresses it, "One must say with regret that Venus Pandemia replaced Venus Urania" (18).

Bishop Bedwini's companion, Illtud, following the association of Taurus and Venus, gives a brief account of the other relationships between the remaining eleven Signs and the seven Planets and a different scheme proposed by Manilius between the twelve Signs and the twelve Olympian deities. This suggests there may be, beyond the twelve Signs, one or two other schemes running through these books; but I will leave those to other scholars and content myself, outside of this book which pushes the association of Taurus and Venus, with just the Zodiacal Signs. In this light, let me mention that the legendary origin of Oxbridge, here recounted (15), is tied to Taurus; and there are a few minor references to cattle in Bedwini's recounting of the synod ("cow-bells," "bull-necked," and "salt beef," all related to heretics [173]).

In Book Three, the opening is a conversation between a Celtic poet, Gwion, and a Germanic poet,

Daegrafn. The latter had been captured in battle and given as a slave to the former, but Gwion now considers Daegrafn "brother and... colleague" (19). The brotherhood of the two poets is appropriate for the Sign of Gemini the Twins, which the sun enters on the 20th of April. The setting is at what will later be Cambridge (19), and Daegrafn indicates that the date is the latter part of the Zodiacal Signs:

The sunshine of May beats down on these marshes,  
Bright with ladies' smock and kingcups.  
The cuckoo calls over the water meadows, and the  
sedge warbler  
Dryly discourses. (20)

The relationship to the history of Artorius is not sequentially established. This book's events simply occur while Artorius, Gwaichmai, and others are involved in a stag hunt (19); it is certainly subsequent to the synod of the previous book (21) -- but how much later is not clear.

A second use of the Twins motif, in the general sense of brethren as established by the two poets, occurs in the appearance of Apollo and Mercury near the end of the book (29-31); they are called "brothers" here (29, 30), but this seems a rhetorical relationship, Apollo standing for Mind and Beauty, if I read the poem correctly, and Mercury for Communication (30, bottom 4 ll.). It is true that most readers associate Apollo with poetry generally, but Gwion in his invocation stresses that Mercury invented the lyre and then gave it to Apollo (30). Perhaps one might say that they stand, more precisely than the above identifications, for Mental Composition and Performance (or Publication) respectively.

In the fourth book, named with the Sign of Cancer the Crab -- which the sun enters on the 22nd of June -- the time is established in the opening invocation of the Muse, and Heath-Stubbs mentions his birth under this sign:

Come back, Calliope, at call; we have been  
straying  
With some of your sisters down sylvan byways.  
But now it is the solstice, and the sun in  
splendour,  
Caught in the claws of the watery Crab,  
At the topmost of his career turns at the tropic,  
And at Midsummer moves to a retrograde motion.  
This is the mansion of the Moon, and a time for  
mysteries:  
This sign also signalled the beginning of my  
sojourn  
Upon the earth, and by that augury I am oblique,  
Cradled by the Crab, crustaceous and devious,  
And moved by the subjective moods of Selene --  
The more fitted, by that potency, for this  
project which I pass to. (34)

After establishing in a few lines that he is going to describe a psychological preparation, an underground initiation, of Artorius before his crowning, Heath-Stubbs continues:

It is the Vigil of the Baptist; now bonfires are  
built  
To feed and furnish the Sun with Fire  
At his height, and with heat for the ripening  
harvest. (34)

He then turns to the setting at Stonehenge, and Merddyn's (Merlin's) instructions to Artorius. (I notice the connection of the Moon, then considered a

planet, and the Zodiacal Sign in the invocation; but I will leave, as I promised, the planetary influences to other scholars.)

The allusions to the Crab in the text involve metaphors about Artorius shedding his shell as he goes through his underground initiation: Merddyn tells him "to shred off all your shells" when he starts (35); Anubis, Artorius's guide, later tells him to "Cast off your carapace" (37), which makes the image specific; and Anubis says again to him, "Cast your last shell in the cave of Ceridwen" (41) -- and last shell is perhaps appropriate, for Artorius finds himself in the seventh circle "stark as he was born" (41). When Artorius awakes from his visions, "His armour was heavy on him" (44), which may be a Crab reference.

The fifth book consists of a Pindaric ode -- presumably that which Gwion said earlier he would write for Artorius' coronation at Caerleon (20). The book is named for Leo the Lion, the Sign that the sun enters on the 23rd of July, and this is established in the first stanza of the ode:

Tangling in the Lion's mane,  
The Sun, cast up from the Underworld,  
Swelters the Caesarean month; where now  
Kronion, gatherer of the clouds,  
Directs his rumbling car across  
The arid vault of the air, the unsickled fields.  
(45)

Typical of the Pindaric odes, this one has a number of obscurities; and two of them involve the time sequence I am concerned with. In the fourth stanza -- the second strophe -- these lines appear, presumably addressed to Artorius:

Remember your course is set toward the  
Scorpion's  
Claws, and the resurgence of the adversary. (45)

When I look at the eighth book, titled "Scorpio," I do not find that it itself deals with such matters -- at least, not at all directly. Indeed, to even make it work indirectly, the reader would have to consider Artorius' wife, not Modred, to be his adversary. (As part of the myth of the White Goddess this may be so.) However, I will suggest later at the end of the seventh book which may be what Gwion's ode predicts.

The second obscure time reference is the last stanza, the third epode:

In July prepare to fly, beyond the solstice  
Where the Scorchers are trapped in the bag, and  
baited  
Like a honey-badger; the sun-king  
Shorn of his locks, and blinded. (46)

All this means is that in July, at the present time of the coronation, Artorius must prepare to avoid or to accept -- the language is not clear, "to fly" from or to -- such an end as Samson had.

The sixth book does not have a clear seasonal reference within it, except that crops are ripe in central Gaul (48), and I am not certain that its action could be contained in a single month. Modred and a scholar are sent to the mouth of the River Rhone, where now the city of Port-St.-Louis-du-Rhone stands to meet and escort back Guanhumara (Guinevere), Princess of Massilia in Gaul (47). Heath-Stubbs describes, briefly their journey back up the valley of the Rhone and across France, called Gaul in the poem (48). When they

get back, the marriage of Artorius and Guanhumara is celebrated at Carlisle. The Sign of the Zodiac for this book runs from August 23 to September 22, and all I can say is that it seems to be a busy month. But I have held the obvious connection back: the Sign for this book is Virgo the Virgin, and it obviously stands for Guanhumara, before her marriage. (Modred's second song in this book involves the goddess Astraea -- that is, Mercy -- who may also be a virgin [51].)

In contrast to the lack of seasonal references in "Virgo," the next, "Libra," begins with this description:

As the autumnal equinox, in even opposition,  
The bright and heavenly Balances hold  
The softness of summer and the savagery of  
winter;  
As on a field of fighting, the fierce tides  
Doubtfully turn, in indescisive [sic] tumult.  
Yet the doom of Summer is sealed, though the sun  
Suffuses the landscape serenely with light.  
There is an edge of death in the dank air,  
And the fading leaves, as listlessly they fall.  
The swallow and the swift, and the sylvan  
warblers  
Have moved off on migration; no more is heard  
The note of the nightingale, nor the nightjar's  
churning.  
The call of the cuckoo, nor the dry-voiced  
corncrake;  
Richly the apples ripen in the orchards;  
The harvest is garnered and hauled into granges;  
Geese are set in the stubble to glean,  
With relish, the residue of the reaped grain,  
Fattening their flesh for the feast of  
Michaelmas. (53)

This is a marvellously appropriate description for the period starting on the 23rd of September. I hold back for a while a long subsequent passage in which Myrddyn discusses the events up to this point (53-54); but the conclusion of "Libra" is significant now. After Artorius' meeting with his main followers to establish the rule of law, Modred, who suggested at the meeting that his father invade Gaul to establish order there, and so expand his empire -- Modred thinks over his private plans, and the book ends:

Thus Modred mused, in the fane of Michael,  
While softly the sunlight faded from the sky:  
Antares uprose in the arch of the evening.  
The heart of the Scorpion at the heel of the  
hunter,  
Who sank, defeated, in the southern sea. (65)

This reference to the Scorpion, in the penultimate line of "Libra," I think identifies Modred, at least in the most obvious sense, as the "adversary" predicted in the Leonine ode.

Thematically the debating of laws for the kingdom is equivalent to balancing matters on the Scales; but the exact use of language in the debate echoing the Zodiac Sign does not appear. Myrddyn urges Artorius:

Summon then to council your senators and commons,  
To deliberate and determine, in form of debate,  
Wisely and lucidly -- of weight and learning,  
Knowledgeable for this matter.... (54)

The word weight in this passage may be deliberate. Artorius replies with a reference to the Old Testament, including this line:



"You are weighed in the balance, and wanting,  
Belshazzar!" (54)

But a more important use appears later, when the meeting occurs in the Church of Michael, Cornhill, London:

On the westward wall was displayed for worship  
An image of the Assize of the end of the ages:  
The Judge Tremendous, with tokens of terror  
And majesty of mercy, was enthroned in the  
midmost,  
On the clouds of glory....  
...and before Him was set  
A pair of balances with brazen pans.... (56)

As I said, the image of the Scales, the Balance, does not appear in the actual debate; but this image of Heavenly Weighting is indeed an impressive background for it.

The sun enters Scorpio the Scorpion on the 24th of October; the eighth book, named for this Sign, can be dated more precisely, however, as occurring on the 31st of October -- that is, on All Hallows' Eve. A modern Professor of History tells of his adventure at Bury Hill, in Strathmore, Scotland. He says:

I see before me the great stone circle,  
impressive in its antiquity, in the fading  
light of an autumn evening ...tomorrow will  
be November the first, and by the old way of  
reckoning, from the setting of the sun, it is  
already November. (66-67)

At one point the ghost of Queen Guinevere appears to him, apparently with reference to her affair with Modred and the war which followed:

The Scorpion, the scorpion in the loins--  
Its burning heart is Antares,  
The fixed brother of Mars;  
Swords, swords -- the clouds  
Rain swords down from the sky;  
Blood, blood -- the earth  
Is drinking the red dew. (68)

As with most ghosts, she is more attitudinal than clearly communicative; but the echo of Modred's time of musing is impressive. She has a later reference to "the scorpion-guardians" of the gates of the underworld (69).

The next book, the ninth, is named for Sagittarius the Archer; the sun enters that Sign on the 22nd of November. This book is a lecture by the same professor who appeared in "Scorpio." He is, as he says, rather confused

Since I encountered the White Phantom in the circle of stones. White-footed Jennifer, dancing in her own foam. The scorpion in the loins, and the mating dance of the scorpions. But we do not have any scorpions in these islands. Only the harmless book-scorpion, Chelifer, which has no sting. It is found under mossy stones, and between the pages of old books; feeding on psocids or book-lice, and, I suppose, on the book-worms themselves.... (70)

One would think this would be the end of scorpions in this book of Sagittarius -- just a small carry-over into the first paragraph of this next book -- but at the very end "Professor C[heiron] Chelifer" (stress

added) is thanked for his address (74; cf. 73). So much for professors of history!

There is nothing in this ninth book to indicate the time in late November or early December. In the second paragraph of his address, the professor says, by way of apology for not giving a formal address, "I draw a bow, as it were, at a venture" (70), which does identify him, to an extent, with Sagittarius. And he has a later reference to the "nomad archers of the steppes," referring mainly to the Huns; it is one of his digressions, but it does include the Sagittarian note in its "archers".

Near the end of the speech, in one of the prophetic passages which have crept in since the professor met the mysterious woman on All Hallows' Eve, he says:

I bore a banner in the battle order of  
Artorius. I behold him among the dark forests  
of Armoria, in rebellion against the Emperor,  
an act of hubris. And to him comes a  
travel-stained messenger, with tidings of  
disaster. It is the courteous Gwalchmai, with  
news of the wounding of his honour. The  
unnatural rebellion of Modred, the nephew  
against his mother's brother. Of the son  
against the father, unnaturally and  
incestuously begotten. (74)

I call this a prophetic passage (in the popular sense; not in the religious sense of speaking the mind of God), and rightly so in this volume, for both the ghost of Guinevere in "Scorpio" and this passage here precede the rebellion which is told in the next book. That is, despite the professor being a modern, so far as the internal chronology of Heath-Stubb's recounting of the myth is concerned, this passage predicts what is yet to come -- in the original Arthurian time sequence and in the experience of the reader.

The tenth book is named for Capricorn the Goat, whose Sign the sun enters on the 22nd of December. The book has a long introduction about the gods, which is of importance in a discussion of Heath-Stubb's view of religion, I suspect, but not to this seasonal catalogue. Near the end of the history, he writes:

The Saturnalia was celebrated at the Winter  
Solstice  
In remembrance, by the Romans, of the reign of  
Saturn:  
By ritualized ribaldry, and licensed riot --  
The posts are decked, the poticos and the  
doorways,  
With gaiety and greenery, and gifts exchanged....  
(76)

After four more lines about the Saturnalia, he continues:

But at this season of midwinter mirth, the  
Saviour,  
Christ was born, in the cavern at Bethlehem,  
To oust from Olympus the etiolated eidola....  
(76)

Nine lines later, this astrological image appears:

From the Solstice of Capricorn the Cross stems  
up,  
The ends of the transom transfixing the equinoxes,  
The summit at Cancer -- Christ in the circle  
Of the stars of fatality, to ensure our freedom,

Slain for our salvation, in the celestial wheel,  
From the foundation of the world; he was found  
worthy. (77)

Whatever the paradoxes of fatality and freedom mean in this passage, the general effect is to place Christ within the ancient cycle of the Signs of the Zodiac. In one sense, there is nothing wrong with this: the Church Year, as it is called, does use the annual cycle for the purposes of Christian edification and reminder. But Heath-Stubbs possibly has something more pagan in mind, making Christ into another solar hero, perhaps.

After this opening, the poem describes some Christian (or Christianized) customs of Christmas -- the giving of gifts, for example -- and some of the less Christian aspects of the modern season. Then it returns to the Arthurian setting:

They kept the feast at the castle of Cadbury;  
While solid snow silvered the landscape,  
And hungrily the wolves howled to the wind. (77)

Heath-Stubbs describes the decorations at length -- mistletoe and greenery of holly and ivy -- and the foods (78). After dinner, a variety of entertainments is offered. Perhaps I should be explicit that Artorius is off invading Armorica, while Guanhumara rules in the castle. Modred lets in his soldiers for the rebellion in the guise of letting in Christmas mummers, and they sing a marvelous pagan parody of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" before they reveal themselves (80-82).

Thus, the first part of the book takes place on Christmas. The second, simply "On a night in January" (85); that is when Bishop Bedwini, Gwalchmai, and Brother Cadoc come to Queen Guanhumara, rescuing her by bribery from the White Tower in London (84-85). The third section, with Guanhumara at a nunnery in Ireland, is not dated, and may or may not fall under the Sign of the Goat. Certainly Brother Cadoc's emphasis on her lechery in the second section may be related to Capricorn (86), and perhaps the Gluttony and Avarice mentioned in the Christmas celebrations in the first section can too (77). The most certain reference is Modred's mummers who are referred to as

A grotesque gallimaufry of horned goat-men,  
Satyrs and sylvans in a savage rout,  
Misshapened forms, monstrously masked,  
Trotting into the hall, traipsing among the  
tables. (79)

And, in the third section, after the part about Guanhumara, there is a brief description of the sack of Cadbury castle in which the Picts who were helping Modred continue to sing "the garbled goat-song" (87) -- that is, the version of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" with its reference to "the horned man in a holly tree" (80).

The eleventh book is titled with the symbol for Aquarius the Water Bearer, whose sign the sun enters on January the 20th. The chorus, in its opening formal ode, the Parados -- for the form is that of a classical tragedy -- mentions the Sign:

It is past midwinter, but not yet  
The sun glints on the candour  
of Abyssinian snows; not yet  
The heavenly water-bearer reverses  
His fruitful urn. (89)

Eleven lines later, the chorus refers to the battle between Artorius and Modred taking place

Under the razor of the January wind. (89)

So the final battle takes place in late January, according to Heath-Stubbs -- to fit the Sign, it must be after January the 20th. But according to this text, not yet February.

There are a large number of references to wells, rivers, and rain in this Aquarian book -- "Blessing on the wells and springs of Britain" (89) -- but I will content myself with two matters. First, Artorius asks Bedwyr (Bedivere) to throw his sword, Caliburn (91; Excalibur), to the "Lady of the glimmering lake" (94). Although it is not thrown in this play, Bedwyr agrees to do it (94, 96), and the lake reference is appropriate for Aquarius. Second, intertwined in presentation with the references to the sword, which Bedwyr calls "The active power" (94), are references to a crystal cup, called by Artorius "the passive power" (94) -- and called by a goddess, "The Morigan" according to the text (Morgan le Fay), a "gleaming grail" (88); this is far, indeed, from the usual Grail theme of the Arthurian mythos. This crystal cup is also referred to as the "Luck", with a capital L, of Artorius (93, 94); but the goddess refers to it as her Luck, capital L, and calls it Artorius' luck only with a small l (88). However a critic wishes to discuss this, the goddess takes the crystal cup at the first of the play, then when the dying Artorius asks for a drink of water in it, he cannot have it. (For its origin, cf. 44) Then Artorius asks for, "in an earthen cup, some drink" (94); Bedwyr offers him, and he drinks after some hesitation, some wine. I do not know if Artorius could have lived if he had drunk water under the Sign of Aquarius, but Heath-Stubbs does emphasize the wine.

The twelfth Sign of the Zodiac is Pisces the Fishes, which the sun enters on the 19th of February. I find eight versions of the word fish in the book, distributed among fishes, fishermen, and a cuttle fish. There are three seals of some significance (99-101), and references to a mermaid or sea-morgan (98), "a green sea-turtle" and a dolphin (99), and, in Zennora's song, a crab, a squid, a shark, and another sea-morgan (100). (The sea-morgans may be intended to remind a reader that the name of Morgan le Fay began as a term for a sea-goddess.) The book, as indicated before, tells of setting Artorius' body on a raft to float out to sea.

This concludes the survey of the ties of the Signs of the Zodiac to the twelve books of Artorius. What I have intended is one type of structural analysis of the poem: the events of Artorius' reign over a period of years are restructured into a year's cycle, into the cycle of the Zodiac. This is made explicit by Myrddyn's speech at the beginning of "Libra", the seventh book:

"Listen to my words, the last of my wisdom:  
In the sign of the Ram, in the raging slaughter  
Of the field of Badon, the four-sided fortress,  
You prosecuted war for the promotion of peace,  
Establishing externally the order of empire;  
In the sign of the Bull, the bishops in synod  
Determined by dogma the lines of doctrine;  
In the sign of the Twins, song and sentence,  
The lines of communication, by your laureates  
were cleared;  
The conduits of rhetoric were cleansed of rubble  
.....  
In the sign of the Crab, I sent you to Ceridwen,  
From the maddening moonlight to the mother's  
cauldron,  
And you utmost anxieties -- an inner order  
Was created in that descent to the darkness



of her cavern;  
 In the sign of the Lion, the loud suffrage  
 And the plea of the people prompted you to your  
 crowning;  
 In the sign of the Virgin, this was validated by  
 the solemnity  
 Of wedlock to a bride — the wine and the bread  
 And the common cup, signify the completeness,  
 The consumation of life: to the crowned couple  
 The guests do homage, in gladness of that  
 grace[.]  
 .....  
 Now is the time for this knowledge to be  
 translated  
 Into forms of government, to guide those who  
 follow;  
 That stability of the state may stand the firmer,  
 And a code of law be left to the land. (53-54)

This last instruction applies to the Sign of Libra, as has been said; but, due to Modred, the debate never reaches its issuance in laws.

The next two signs, Scorpio and Sagittarius, deal with a modern Professor of History and not directly with the events of Artorius' reign. I could write a defense of this use a foil, but it would take me away from my Zodiacal theme. Let me add my suspicion that the references to scorpions in "Sagittarius" mean that that book, less its two brief references to archery, was once the last part of "Scorpio" (a No play + a lecture). I suspect that Heath-Stubbs tried and failed to write a book for "Sagittarius" on Artorius' war in Gaul. If I am wrong, then Heath-Stubbs is doing something more subtle in "Sagittarius" than I comprehend.

The last three books are straight-forward in their relationship to Artorius' career. In the Sign of the Goat, Modred rebels; in the Sign of the Water Bearer, the battle of Camlann between Artorius and Modred occurs; and in the Sign of the Fish, Artorius' body is given to the sea.

One question remains. What Heath-Stubbs has done is clear; but why has he done it? What function does the Zodiac have? Most intelligent moderns do not believe in astrology; certainly the influences of the Signs are the realm of entertainment, financial conning of the naive, and folly, today. I hesitate to conjecture that Heath-Stubbs believes in such material, whatever his theology. Therefore, I assume that he is using it for historical purposes. His material is medieval, and he has used medieval beliefs to structure his work. There is an essay by William Spencer, "Are Chaucer's Pilgrims Keyed to the Zodiac?" which argues elaborately and, I believe, convincingly that Chaucer organized the portraits in "The General Prologue" on the basis of the Signs and their planetary influences. In the present age, in which James Joyce has organized the episodes of *Ulysses* elaborately by classical parallel, color, organ of the body, and what-have-you, Heath-Stubbs' organization by the Zodiac can be taken as a similar structuring device, without the belief which lay behind Chaucer's use.

But, as Heath-Stubbs makes clear in the opening invocation, he sees the Zodiac as symbolic of the life of man, Artorius or another:

But principally you, Calliope, I presume to ask  
 preside  
 At equinox and at solstice, at the sun's turnings  
 to sing  
 Of war and of Justice, of Warlockry and a

Wounding.  
 Present then for man's life a paradigm, his  
 passage,  
 Like the sun, through symbols; his season's  
 progress  
 From spring's heyday to high summer and harvest,  
 And lastly to the laggard lagoon of old age  
 Where his son supplants him and the cycle  
 returns.  
 Labour continual is his lot; Alcides learned  
 this  
 In his twelve month of toils, under a hard  
 taskmaster —  
 Battling against beasts, and against brigands  
 also,  
 Monsters whose hollow dens are in the mind of  
 Man:  
 The heart of the human being is its own Heaven's  
 ruler,  
 Through baleful constellations its course it must  
 keep. (29)

Thus, the Zodiac serves in three ways: it gives a simple structural pattern of twelve episodes for an epic; it reinforces the medieval background; and to some degree, it enlarges the story of Artorius' life into that of Everyman.

To Be Continued



## Enlist Now for Awards Committees

The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award and Scholarship Award Committee Chairperson would like to remind members that it is time to think about nominations for the 1986 awards -- and about volunteering to serve on the selection committee. Eligibility requirements for nomination of books for the Scholarship Award and for serving on the selection committee are the same as for the Fantasy Award: you must be a member of the Society; for nominations, no more than five books; for serving on the committees you must state your willingness to read or reread all finalists. Members may nominate books for both awards, and may serve on both committees.

Criteria for book selection: for the Fantasy Award, a fantasy work published during 1986 that best exemplifies "the spirit of the Inklings." A work reissued in paper during 1986 that had been published earlier may be nominated whether or not it had previously been nominated, as long as it did not make the finalists' list. At the nominations level, and at the finalist level, a majority of "no award" votes (if the committee members feel none of the choices should receive the award) will require we make no award for the year. The scholarship award is given for a book on Tolkien, Lewis, and/or Williams that makes a significant contribution to Inklings scholarship. Books published during 1984-6 are eligible for the award; books may be renominated.

Nominations for both awards, and for selection committee volunteers, should be sent to Christine Lowentrout, 1017 Seal Way, Seal Beach Ca. 90740, by FEBRUARY 20, 1987. Committee members, please state your willingness to read all the finalists, and also state whether or not you are willing to have your name and address included on a list to be distributed only among the members of your committee for purposes of intercommunication. There will be a preliminary vote in May, and the final vote is due July 15. The awards will be announced at the XVIIIth Mythopoeic Conference. Let your voice be heard!

# THE 18TH ANNUAL MYTHOPOEIC CONFERENCE

JULY 24~27, 1987 MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

Scholar Guest of Honor

Author Guest of Honor

CHRISTOPHER TOLKIEN JOHN BELLAIRS

"Looking Back from Weathertop: A Fifty Years' Retrospective"  
Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the publication of  
*The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien

## Location

Marquette University is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (90 miles north of Chicago), and is the home of the Marquette University Archives' J.R.R. Tolkien Special Collection. This includes the original manuscripts of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, variants, unpublished material, and many other kinds of Tolkien related materials.

## Membership

The total room and meals package, including three nights (double occupancy), nine meals (Friday dinner to Monday lunch, including the Banquet) and registration is \$130 until December 31, 1986; \$145

until June 1, 1987; \$160 thereafter. Space may be limited; please make your reservations early.

Registration for those providing their own lodging and meals is \$30 until June 1987, \$40 thereafter.

## Special Exhibits

There will be a display of Tolkien's original manuscripts of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* courtesy of University Archives' Special Collection.

J.R.R. Tolkien's original illustrations from *The Hobbit* will be displayed, courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

There will also be translations of *The Hobbit* and other works by Tolkien in 24 languages, with illustrations, courtesy of Glen H. GoodKnight, Founder of the Mythopoeic Society.

## Call for Papers

The Conference especially welcomes papers that deal with all aspects of *The Hobbit*, as well as other works by J.R.R. Tolkien such as *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*. Papers dealing with other authors and topics are sought. A brief description of the intended paper should be sent as soon as possible to Papers Coordinator: Richard C. West, 1918 Madison St., Madison, WI 53711.

Besides papers and panels, there will be films, an art show, an auction, a masquerade, dealers' room, awards (the Mythopoeic Fantasy and Scholarship Awards), a banquet, and Bardic circles.

## 20th Anniversary

1987 is also the twentieth anniversary of the Mythopoeic Society, the sponsoring organization of the Conference, and special program items are planned. The Society is interested in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and the genres of Myth and Fantasy from which they have drawn and then enriched. For a descriptive brochure and order form, listing the many publications and other items available, write to the Mythopoeic Society, Box 6707, Altadena, CA 91001



Mythcon XVIII. Box 537. Milwaukee, WI 53201-0537